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*Mrs. Harrison,
with her husband,
Dr. Paul Harrison*



NOTE — Anna Monteith Harrison was born in Martin, Michigan, and grew up on a farm. She graduated from Kalamazoo College, where she was the leader of the Student Volunteer band, and later took work at Hartford Seminary. A gift for music has given pleasure to her colleagues and release and relaxation for herself. It has also endowed her with a sensitive ear for the fine shades of an alien language, and an equally sensitive heart has made her peculiarly fitted to understand and interpret the minds and hearts of the Arabs.

Her years of working with her doctor husband in Matrah, Bahrain and en tour, have made her proficient as a medical assistant both in clinics and operating rooms, and have afforded her unique experience, which her facility for describing them enables her readers to share.



GLOSSARY

Amcer (Am-eer) —a prince

Sherf—honor

Sheikh (Shaikh) —head of a tribe, or a religious teacher

Daleel (dal-eel) —a guide

Pasha (Pá-sha) —a Turkish title

Bisht—a very light Arab cloak

Mulla (Mul-lah; u as in “pull”) —a religious teacher

Hajj—the pilgrimage to Mecca

Mejlis (mej-lis) a reception room (literally “place of sitting”) or the reception itself. Also Parliament

Wahabi Islam (Wah-hâbi Is-lam) Wahabis are the Puritans of Islam

Hejazi (Hej-aá-zi) Hejazis are residents of Hejaz, the region of Arabia containing the holy cities of Mecca and Medina.

Desert Diary

by ANNA MONTEITH HARRISON

Dec. 12



WE ARE SITTING around a charcoal brazier waiting for our evening tea. Gamasha, who is skilled in the ritual, has pushed it close against the coals and it is giving out a delicate and delicious odor. The night air is crisp and cold, and our windows are shut against it.

Burhaan, always the essence of propriety, has just delivered a eulogy on the Ameer. We were all in a mood to appreciate his well ordered speech for we have just been given the use of the best building in Hassa. It will be the talk of the town — that the doctor from Bahrain has been put in no less than the Royal Guest House! Our “*shierf*” will be high and mighty. Burhaan’s eyes are glowing with uncontrollable pride. Even I find myself drawn to romantic speculation as I finger the soft rug under me and look at the King’s own divan at the end of the room.

Paul, who is a realist, has no such thoughts. He is drinking his second cup of tea and figuring out when to expect the camel caravan which is bringing in the medical boxes. Day after tomorrow they should be here. But even he is too honest to suppose camels will arrive when they are expected.

It was only this noon that we left Ojeir, the port of Hassa. A disappointing place it was, with its circle of ugly buildings facing the customs yard. The arrival of our car brought a wave of life to the row of Bedouin squatting in the sun. Curiosity mastered their inertia and propelled them towards us. It would be unbearable not to find out who these newcomers were and where they were going.

Pulling their ragged garments about them as they walked, they lined up to inspect us. By this time Paul had gone inside to present his credentials to the Sheikh and ask permission for us to proceed. I sat in dark seclusion in the front seat. Gamasha had knowingly

covered me with my large black abba before we entered the town. We were in Nejd now, she said. And her voice forbade all discussion on the matter. I was grateful now. The poor Bedouin circled and stared but could see nothing. But I, peeking through a crack in my black covering, could see everything, and I laughed silently as only a woman can who is veiled and yet sees everything!

Paul emerged from the big door with a flood of Arabs in his wake. Would-be travellers made for unoccupied cracks in our small truck. Murmurs of disapproval rose from Burhaan, Hassan and Gamasha. Hurriedly they began to spread out over their luggage. Abdul Nebi put in some words in Persian which we understood without a translator. At that, all but one intruder receded. He, with his better than ordinary clothes, declared he was an agent of the Ameer and squeezed himself in.

A thin dark man carrying a large musket came around to the front door, apparently expecting me to evacuate in his favor. He was the "*daleel*" he said. Every car had a guide to take them over the sands. It was bad business, this, asking a guide to give up his seat to a woman, but Paul explained as best he could. The man's courtesy was quick and gracious. With a nod of his heavy turban he went to the back of the truck. In another moment I heard him settling in on the luggage behind me.

Our path lay to the west where the sands stretched out to meet the sky. With loud chugging our engine started. Our bulging truck became a craft embarking on a sea of sand. Great golden waves loomed ahead, and we rode over them like a ship in a storm. Nothing could be heard over the wheezing of the engine and the wrenching of the truck. The strain began to tell, we lost our momentum. Finally, in a trough of light sand, we slowed to a stop.

While the car was being dug out Gamasha and I walked on ahead. Over the crest of the next great wave I walked down into a world that was all alone by itself. Its silence was breathless, its vastness shimmered off into infinitude. Dunes sculptured with the abandon of the Master Artist, lay with their creamy faces against the sky. Their beauty filled me with awed elation. For a moment the mortal in me seemed to lift — and I was one with what had been and would be.

Eventually, and with less digging out than we had expected, we came to the edge of the sands. Our car was once more upon solid ground, the sun-baked clay of the lowland. The *daleel* relaxed his

vigil and put his hands inside his cloak. Burhaan, whose center of gravity had been much disturbed by our swinging and swaying, had lost his breakfast thrice over and was crumpled in a most undignified position over his box. Gamasha was rubbing the bruises off the top of her head. Hassan, who always had a word for anything and everything, was offering witty comments on the trials of travelling.

The green line on the horizon marked the beginning of the oasis. Half an hour later we were among the date gardens, riding between rows of stately palms. El Hassa is the name given to this great oasis section, fed as it is by a series of natural springs.

We were headed for Hofhoof, the capital, a large town lying on the western edge of the gardens. The trees were casting long shadows when we rode out from under them and saw before us the jagged outlines of a walled city silhouetted against the sky. Skirting the old moat that followed the walls we came to the large north gate set under its twin turrets. Visions of bygone days came before my eyes. I pictured Turkish pashas looking out from the small windows, horrified at the sight of Bedouin hords laying siege against their walls. Instead, a young guard in khaki uniform rose to his feet and beckoned us to stop. Asking for our names he wrote them on a small piece of paper held in his hand. Then, with a click of his leather shoes, he saluted us. The Ameer, he said, was expecting us. Would we proceed to the small gate ahead and then turn right. We had arrived!



ON THE EDGE OF AN ARABIAN TOWN



OUR FIRST PIECE of medical work has gone off beautifully, and how thankful we are. We did not know till we were here that the Ameer's only daughter needed her tonsils out, but that, it seems, is the special reason for our coming. The operation was performed in his own house. Everything from operating table to scrub brushes had to be carried over there. It made a spectacular procession, to say the least.

Gamasha and I were sent over to get the patient ready. She was led in by two slave women — all three heavily veiled. An unpromising picture. The utmost diplomacy was called for. Modesty had to be preserved at any cost. Gamasha dismissed the slaves and got the girl on the table, but the veil was being held tight over her face. But Gamasha has not had her years in the women's hospital for nothing. Even as she assented to the tearful demands of the patient she slowly pried up the black veil and slipped the white mask underneath. Down went the drops of chloroform, "Count," she ordered. "*Wahid — ethnain — thalatha.*" The girl's voice began to trail off into a thin moan. The veil was removed. On came the doctor and his assistants.

I saw the Ameer for a moment after the operation. His daughter, coming out of the anesthetic, began to cry for him. I smiled at her fretful voice demanding him to come. No one in the whole realm would dare to speak to him that way. Only to this one girl was that unspeakable privilege given. For the name of the Ameer is a name to make even Bedouin tremble. So feared is he that even in the open desert men dare not commit a crime. His judgments are swift and terrible — and they have brought law and order into every corner.

He appeared suddenly in the doorway — causing consternation among the unveiled slave women. His short, stocky figure disappointed me. I had pictured him as tall and austere. For a second he plucked at his black bushy beard and sent a hasty greeting in my direction. Then, still standing in the doorway, he looked down at his daughter. "Be a woman. Do not cry," he said sternly but kindly. Then he turned quickly and disappeared.

Gamasha and I go each morning to apply hot cloths and answer questions. I am trying to clear up the mystery of our medical practices and combat local theories concerning disease. If I can persuade my daily audience that enlarged tonsils are not caused by the evil eye

nor yet by taking a bath in the full of the moon I shall consider myself a modern miracle worker.

In the meantime the town is surging with rumors about the operation. One section has it that we removed our patient's head and put it back on again. Another is spreading the word that several evil things were taken out of her stomach. Many still think she is still deathly ill. But all agree that this is a great doctor or the Ameer, may he be given long life, would not have let him do anything.

Dec. 19

|| IT IS LABORIOUS BUSINESS being a woman in this land! I am wearing Arab clothes rather than to furnish the people the spectacle of our own. At this late day I do not want to be called immodest! Long ample gowns are, of course, better fitted for sitting on the floor. Even my unskilled genuflections go by unnoticed. I can shift my limbs as I like.

But oh, the sheer quantity of my clothes! I can manage as long as I sit still, but when I walk I am undone. Even my head is swathed and bound, not an inch of my neck can be exposed to light of day. My sleeves are down to my hands and both hidden under various folds and drapes. If I so much as put my head out of the door I must veil my face and put on my local *bisht*. It is a tremendous cloak of coarse sheep's wool and hangs from my head to the ground. In it I cannot decide whether I feel like a circus tent or the grandstand!

Gamasha and I have made a few calls, although here that is not considered a suitable occupation for decent women. Women of high standing very seldom go out of their houses. The Ameer's wife can get to her sister-in-law next door through a connecting passage, but even this she does only to give the feast day greetings or in case of death! Yet Arab etiquette is much more rigid than is our own. It follows a definite and invariable pattern. And I think this is the reason that life even in a secluded harem does not go stale. A well kept formality raises it to a high level and preserves it from decay. This ritual of hospitality calls for only a cup of coffee, but it is given to the woman of low degree with the same dignity were it being offered to a king.

It is a fine thing to hear the exchange of greetings among the women. Poets must have carved the well turned phrases. To listen to them is to hear music — and more. It is to be made to feel that life has meaning and beauty, that human relationships are full of grace and dignity. Women suffer much in the East. They are deprived of much that makes for happiness and comfort. It is to their eternal credit that they will not bow the neck to pain or ingratitude. Their spirits are unbroken as they lift their heads and accept life's gifts — of good or evil. They know that to clothe common things with grace and beauty is to keep the heart glad. Gracious words may be given and received by rich and poor alike. They make for pure democracy. I think the Arab has learned that better than anyone I know.

Christmas in Riyadh!

A SURPRISE of the first order. Yet it seems fitting that this year which has brought us so much of change should have landed us in a place we had never expected to see.

At the end of only a week in Hassa we were told that the King wanted us in Riyadh. There was nothing to do but pack our boxes and go. Kings' orders are not questioned here. Our caravan, in this modern age, consisted of one large truck and one sedan. It seems a miracle that everything and everybody actually arrived. There has not been a drop of rain this winter and the roads were unspeakable. The cars were loaded beyond imagination.

How Arab drivers do tempt Providence! Our sedan was a relic of better days. It could not be started except by being pushed, and yet it was considered fit to make a three hundred mile trek across that desert. The truck, carrying our heavy hospital boxes, drums of gasoline, tins of oil, casks of water, besides a dozen or more passengers, had no spare tire. The driver had left it entirely to Allah to see him through. Evidently he had over estimated his claim for divine protection, for, when still hours from Riyadh, he had a blowout. The truck and its occupants had a weary wait till we could send a rescue party back for them.

We camped two nights in the desert. At sunset Sa'ad, our Bedouin guide, would scan the landscape for firewood. When we would come to a hollow, dotted with clumps of dry brush, he would motion the

driver to pull to the side. Then every man knew his duty. Passengers went off in all directions to pull up the thin stalks. It would take many arnsful to supply us with fuel.

Determined to get some exercise, I set out with the rest. Paul and I were rewarded by shy, Bedouin smiles when we brought in our contribution. We felt free then to wander off as we liked. Day had quickly faded, leaving the distant ridges outlined against the great pale sky. The evening star came out — hugging the skirts of a slender moon. Stillness and peace had thrown their mantle over the open desert. It's sharp and glaring barrenness had now become a flood of gentle shadows. Down in the hollow the campfire was being lit. Its yellow fangs were striking at the darkness of the night. A white tent stood upright like an Arab beginning his evening prayer. I could hear the mellow voice of Sa'ad as he directed the various duties of the camp. The Ameer had made him responsible for this trip and all of us.

He was a fine specimen — Sa'ad. I had watched him all day, sitting like a falcon on the front seat, beside the driver. When the road was bad he did much directing with his stiff, jerky fingers. Never did he seem uncertain about his course. The desert, so unintelligible to us, was to him an open book. Only when the road was open, and the truck coming well behind, would Sa'ad relax his watch. Then he would take time off to rewrap the double fold of his head shawl. If the road continued good he sometimes broke forth into song. His voice was plaintive and minor. It would rise and fall in uneven wavers and end suddenly on a long nasal note. I tried hard to understand the words, but could get nothing. Evidently they were from his native dialect.

An artist would have loved to paint Sa'ad's face. Every feature stood out strong and true. From under his shaggy brows his eyes shone like twin pools of dark fire. His cheeks were deeply lined and thin. Below his large mouth a scraggly beard was beginning to gray. Once when we stopped at a well Sa'ad showed his character. We were late, and we were out of water. This was a very small well, but it was the only source of water for miles around. Bedouin and their camels were already crowding it when we pulled up. Our men were in a hurry, and they demanded their rights as the King's caravan. But the Bedouin at the well were in no mood to give up their places. Anger flared up like a sudden fire. There was hot talk of settling it with guns. Then I saw Sa'ad walk over to them. His voice showed no trace of concern as he spoke to them. There was utter courtesy in his

manner, and his words were slow and easy. And I could see that under his coolness their heat expired. Like so many children they all became quick friends. In a few moments the combined forces were pulling at the ropes, and laughing as they worked. We got our water eventually and moved on.



IN APPEARANCE RIADH IS A MEDIEVAL TOWN

The nights were cold, and we were glad for the protection of our tent. It was small, and there were eight of us to sleep in it, but, with an unanimous vote, we invited Hemza, the camp cook, to sleep in with us. He was very thin, and might find the cold too much for him. We smiled guiltily to each other, knowing that our generosity was well mixed with selfish thinking of our own stomachs. For if Hemza should get ill who would prepare our food?

He was an interesting derelict, our cook. When I first saw him I wondered what had happened to my eyes. Then I realized that he was not an Arab, but a Javanese. His Arabic, though easy, had an unmistakable foreignness about it. He was glad to explain himself to me. Lighting a small and foul smelling cigarette he squatted down on his thin legs and began his story. His parents had gone on the Hajj from Java. Like so many others, they had taken sick in Mecca and had hard work to get back. Perhaps they never did get back, Hemza was not sure, but one thing he did know — that he was born there. He had lived, at times, in almost every mentionable place in the Hejaz and Nejd, and had plied many trades.

I do not know his ability as a tailor, nor yet as a mechanic, but he was a marvel as camp cook. After riding all day on the top of the lurching, swaying truck he would climb down at evening, light his cigarette and begin his search for kitchen utensils. His work had just begun. It was on him to fill the mouths of all eighteen of us. I never knew how he did it. He seemed never really to apply himself hard at the job. One could hear him scolding his two ragged young assistants a great deal, and see them all sitting before their huge kettle, poking brushwood into its fire. Then, although very late, we would be rewarded by a tray of steaming rice and meat.

The lovely thing about a desert journey is the comradeship it engenders. The Bedouin, who otherwise would have held aloof, considering us a different and inferior breed, began to look at us with friendly eyes. The common road, the shared food and water, their beloved desert, had made us brothers. The light that shone from their eyes was a new light, and was a coveted boon. It was with no little pride that we realized we had been accepted into the circle of the elite, the desert fraternity.

Paul has been to see the King. We are here, apparently, to treat the eyes of one of his daughters. I am to go out to see her tomorrow. The boys have unpacked the boxes over in the town's dispensary. Their report of that center seems hard to believe. Could it be that here in the Capital the only provision for medical needs is a dirt floored, dust covered, mud house from which drugs were grudgingly dispensed to those who have the courage to go there! Paul and the boys will begin to treat people there tomorrow. Already the Bedouin are asking when they can come in.

Dr. Adeeb, a young and handsome doctor from Damascus, came in to have tea with us. He was much interested in my Christmas cake, brought all the way from America to be eaten here in Riadh. That amused him, evidently. We sat together about a charcoal brazier. Our bedding, rolled neatly into the corner, left the rest of the room for sitting about. He asked us what we thought of the war — and what the end of it would be. He, like a few others, listened to the news in Arabic from a radio. It all seemed confused and evil to him. He shook his head at my belief that right would triumph in the end. He had never seen anyone who was not selfishly seeking his own ends, he said, and the world was just like that. We had better get what we could. With all his pessimism he seemed to be contented and cheerful, and in due time, stood up to leave.

Christmas in Riadh, — without a Christmas carol or a Christmas child. I have often wondered what it would be like — a land that did not know Christmas. Now I know. And it is what I expected — a land that does not know how to heal the sick, nor cleanse the lepers, nor preach good tidings to the poor. We have read again Luke's matchless story of the Nativity. We have been thanking God for the Holy Child — for our own dear children, and for all love. Now we shall close the day with a prayer for this land. May the angels sing again over these eastern hills. May the shepherds hear and be glad. May wise men go again in search of their King. May the spirit of the eternal Son of God be born again in us all.

Dec. 30



WE HAVE BEEN here a week, and it has been a busy one. Every morning, as soon as Hemza could be induced to provide us with our morning tea, Paul and the boys left for the dispensary on the other side of town. When they returned for a late lunch they were utterly spent from their forenoon's labor with the crowding, crying Bedouin. The tiny quarters made thorough work out of the question, but hundreds were treated, nevertheless, and have been helped a little. Paul who is defeated by nothing, has



AN IMPOSING ROW OF PILLARS SURROUNDING
A SQUARE COURT IN RIADH

even dared to operate over the mud floor, and the Bedouin, with a flair for the impossible, have proceeded to get well. One room serves as a "ward," and it has ten men in it, lying edge to edge on the floor.

Gamasha and I make regular calls at the "Marabba" — the royal block outside the city. There, in one of the square, upper rooms, we treat our young patient. Her lids which are swollen with trachoma have had one severe treatment, and we are doing the follow up work. She is fourteen, and such a sweet, natural child. She keeps up a running comment as she holds the hot fomentations to her eyes. Her mother, she said, died years ago, leaving four small children, but the King had then married the dead mother's sister so she could look after them. Her father, she explained, had four wives, but they were not jealous of each other, as one would think, but called on each other, and were friends. They all lived there in the palace, but in different houses. She said she liked the doctor because he was like her father, he talked with her and joked with her. She was going to tell her father to keep the doctor there for a long time, so that her eyes could get better. She hated to have such sore eyes.

Her brothers came in to talk to me, shyly at first, then, when they found that I was human, eagerly and naturally. They were being educated privately by mullas from Mecca. They had heard that I was a Christian. Was that true? What did a Christian believe? How did I pray? They were without prejudice, as only children can be. I felt perfectly at ease with them, and they with me. It was like a breath of fresh, pure air. And it made me utter a prayer for my own soul's good, that it might have childhood virtues.

The older women were coldly careful. Was it true that I did not go on the Hajj? Then why not? Did I pray? Then how? I recited some Psalms, and our Lord's Prayer. It was all pronounced good. There were sighs of relief. They had evidently feared I was without religion. That being taken care of, the oldest woman among them, requested a detailed description of our marriage customs. I ended by telling of my own betrothal and marriage. It held them spellbound. For those few moments they themselves were living vicariously the life that I had lived. A sudden bright light shone in their eyes, but went out when I finished my story.

I have been invited twice to dinner. It was one of the Syrian concubines who asked me first. She was brought to the palace when she was very young, and has worked up to being the most responsible

woman there. She supervises all the sewing women, cooks and stewards who work to keep the King's own court moving and the guests entertained. She is a plump, placid woman, and greeted me with the air of one who had learned to take things without concern. We ate from a large mat filled with dishes of meat and vegetables. There were fruits also: pomegranates from Tayif, oranges from Jaffa, and olives from Syria. With us ate the palace midwife from Damascus and several of the lesser foreign women. The next day one of the Arab wives led me down to a secluded veranda to eat with her. There were various aunts and cousins about the mat, all very shy because of me. I tried to think of a joke I could tell, to break the strain of embarrassment, but none would come. It was a meal without taste or style, but not without a singular effect. Something in it did not agree with me. The next day I was confined to my room, and missed attending the Friday mejlis when the King always pays an official visit to the gathering of his women folk.

Jan. 3



WE ARE having very cold weather, the coldest in a dozen years here. In the morning when I look over the wall of our roof into the garden below I see patches of alfalfa dark and limp from the frost. We all have badly chapped hands, and I even have cracks on my feet. But the cold, dry air makes us feel good.

Our medicines are running out, and Paul has told the King we would like permission to return to Hassa. We are wondering how long before it will be forthcoming. In the meantime we are making more friends in the city. One of the prominent men has had us in to examine his Hassa wife. She will need an operation on her back, and is delighted at the prospect of going to Hassa for it.

She is one of the most attractive women I have ever met. I sit and look at her, full of wonder that in this land where women have no normal channels in which to express their feminine charms there could be a person like her. In the small upper room where she receives me she points to the pretty silk curtains that cover the walls and windows and asks me how I like them. She made them herself, and is proud of them. It is a real boudoir, and my lady, as she sweeps past the long mirror, takes a glimpse of herself, and is pleased with what she

sees. Leaning against the silk cushions she pulls out her silver compact and brushes fresh kohl on her eyelids. As we sip red tea she talks about herself. She is the sister of the Ameer of Hassa. Theirs was a large family, for there were four wives, and they all bore children. She, herself, has had no children although she has been married twice. The King's eldest son took her first, as one of his wives, but he soon divorced her. She was not sorry, for he paid no attention to her. Her present husband was much better, and he was courteous to her. He never got angry with her. She hoped he would never divorce her.

The more I think about Riadh the more it baffles me. The life of this city, isolated as it is by an ocean of barren desert, seems so precarious. Except for a few gardens kept for the pleasure of the rich, the place raises nothing. Its water comes from unbelievably deep wells, pulled by the slow labor of camels. Yet thousands of hungry Bedouin gravitate to this city every year. The edge of the city is flanked with their ragged black tents. I drive through them as I go to the palace. I saw a group of them the other day at the watering place of the camels, gathering fuel and hair wash. One young Bedouin took down his locks and washed them on the spot. The King feels his responsibility for these people. Thousands of bags of rice are imported just for their needs. They respond with a devotion that is beautiful to see. The fact that this desert is still the King's home is proof that at heart he is still what he likes to be called, a Bedouin.

Everything here seems to have some connection with the government — and the King is the government. Everyone seems to be a steward of the King. There is, apparently, no such thing as an independent business in the city. It is also still religious. At the set hours for prayer, the gates of the city are closed. Men go through the streets to tap delinquents on the shoulders and see them headed for the mosque. And yet certain great cracks have begun to show in the wall of Wahabi Islam. Tobacco is smoked secretly, if not openly. I was told that one bold Hejazi even tried to sell it in his shop. It was confiscated by the police, who undoubtedly took it home to enjoy themselves.

Is it not strange that, in the providence of God, an American Oil Company is really the answer to the economic future of the Arabian peninsula! As it has discovered earthly riches for this desert people may we too provide them with those heavenly riches which they so truly need.



OUR TRIP back from Riyadh has had the virtue of being humorous in retrospect. Our vigorous efforts to get away at dawn resulted simply in doing without breakfast and then sitting in our cars till noon waiting for petrol. That, it seemed, was kept locked and no one knew where the key was so early in the morning. Our companions who had watched our strenuous haste with unconcealed bewilderment now relaxed in horizontal comfort in the sun, bracing themselves up at intervals to indulge in brief bits of gossip. Our delay was accepted unquestionably as a dispensation of Providence.

When we did make a start, secure and comfortable in the addition of a third car to our caravan, the old familiar wheezing of our sedan made it evident that her disease, at least, had not been cured in Riyadh. Before we were out of sight of the city she had coughed herself to a standstill. This and other infirmities assailed her during the trip, and at each stop, Abdulla, our driver, lighting a fresh cigarette, would get out and lift up the hood and remove some part of the engine. This he would take to a comfortable place on the sand and set about to repair it. After violently blowing upon it he would rub it with a bit of his head shawl or coat sleeve. To stop a leak he used a wad of dates plucked from the hand of a fellow traveller.

Our guide was a new one, a glum man with an ugly face and a bad cough. He seemed to have no qualification for the job except that he carried a gun. Abdulla, accustomed to such emergencies, assumed leadership and announced that we would try a different road. After we had passed the watering place of Ramaah, crowded with Bedouin and heavy with the aroma of camels, we struck out for the south, heading for the well of Ataybie at the edge of the Dahana.

The truck was a better one this time, and although heavily loaded it never had to have help. The third car, a road wagon, carried not only five men but sundry packages and two beautiful sheep. The driver of that wagon had in him the spirit of a real racer and, in the intervals when our car was really running, he would try to pass us. At such times I would see a yellow streak, Hassan's merry face framed in the window, and, last of all, the lurching bodies of the two sheep — disappearing in a cloud of dust.

Each night when we camped I took a hasty walk off into the desert

to escape seeing the slaughter of the sheep. Nor could I eat of the meat that was served us for our dinner. The cold was with us, and each morning the water skins tied to the fenders were stiff with ice. The engines were started with great difficulty.

The morning of the third day we entered a stretch of light sand. But our sedan, like a horse nearing home, ran as it had never run before. Bouncing and lurching we came at last to a hard plain stiffly punctuated with chalky, wind-worn cliffs. The haze in the distance turned slowly to the gray-green of the date gardens. By mid afternoon we had passed Ain Nejem, the first of the springs, and were entering the city of Hofhoof. The news of our coming had only just reached the Ameer. As we entered our door we were met by a bevy of workmen cleaning out our courtyard. In our absence it had housed the Ameer's camels.

There is no disguising the fact — we are all delighted to be back in Hassa. After our cramped struggle in Riadh we seem suddenly to be overflowing with efficiency and success. How much of it is due to the kindness of the Ameer we know now. The fact that he has put us in these two houses next his own has given us not only the hall mark of his approval but has made it possible for us to do work worthy of such an honor.



A PART OF THE PALACE AT RIADH

The operation on the Ameer's sister went off well. This was her second experience and she had none of the virtues of ignorance. Sitting hunched up on the operating table she held us away with her shrill warnings. There was to be no wick left in her wound this time, nor would she put up with painful dressings! Finally Gamasha, with less guile than force, got her asleep. A large sinus was opened and drained. In a few moments it was all over, the operating table had been removed, and the small, limp patient put under her blankets in the corner of the room. Fidha, her slave nurse, blew the charcoal till it gave out a furious heat, and set a large brass coffee pot on to boil. It was her way of getting life back into its normal groove.

Our houses are connected by an upstairs door, as are all the Ameer's houses, so our visits can be made without putting on our street attire. For me that is a comfort not easily described, and I almost run out of my heelless slippers as I go down the worn mud stairs to the lower room where our patient lives. It is newly plastered and, although windowless, the sunlight, streaming through the open door, makes it light and pleasant. A few rugs cover the floor, and against the wall stand the three boxes my lady brought with her from Riadh.

The daily treatments are a trial. The Ameer's sister evidently inherited some of her father's strong qualities, and they do not go toward making a cooperative convalescent. On occasions when it was evident that a tempest would burst I have retired entirely. Gamasha can hold her own, and it would not do for me to be a spectator to loss of dignity on the part of a great lady.

Jan. 20

GAMASHA has discovered the perfect lattice window from which, all unobserved, I can watch what goes on in the street below. It would seem almost like peeking if I did not know that lattice windows are recognized institutions in the East. No doubt they were built as a concession to female curiosity. Our house juts out beyond the other houses enough to give this corner window an unobstructed view of them all. I can see them standing grimly side by side, forming two solid rows of walls that face each other over a narrow strip of sand. Each house has a large wooden door which is kept shut except when someone goes in or out. Then it creaks

heavily on its wooden hinges as if reluctant to be disturbed. The street is not a long one but ends abruptly in a large, well guarded gate. In the daytime it is open, and through it I catch glimpses of a large open market overcast with a cloud of dust.

The world belongs to men here. With what freedom and vigor they stride along. There is an atmosphere of geniality among them. Voices are deep and hearty, faces are lined by wind and sun but not by strain or fear. Today two groups of Bedouin met each other right below my window. After planting short, crisp kisses over each other's faces they spent several moments in exchanging their musical Bedouin greetings. I was fascinated to see their wholehearted absorption in themselves. Only they existed. What pure independence—what perfect children! Perhaps that is why we always feel instinctively beneath them. We know they do not conform nor would they do ought to conciliate.

I wonder how Jesus would have won such men. How would He have made His "beginning of signs" among them? Would it have been in providing coffee for an embarrassed host, even as He provided wine? Would it have been in sitting at a well with a woman—to tell her that she was a child of God, and to teach others how to honor women? Would it have been in going the second mile on a lonely road? How would he have captured their irresponsible hearts and minds? Is it so simple that we have missed it?

Almost opposite our house there is a small mosque. Its walls are low and crumbling, and I can look over them into the barren, unkempt court yard. Five times a day an old man climbs up into the tiny minaret and gives the call to prayer but few come in to pray.

We have made Friday a day for women only at the hospital. Yesterday we started out, virtuously happy in thus sponsoring sex equality in this land. But the women, so unused to facing the world outside their own four walls, brought their men folk along to talk for them! Soon the place was full of beards, and my own face, uncovered and strange, paralyzed traffic so badly I thought best to disappear.

In the operating room (called so only because we worked there) things went better. There the general public was excluded. Each woman was allowed but one protecting male, and some, I am proud to say, came in alone. At one end of the room, under a wheezing petromax lantern Paul and I worked at the table, at the other Abdul Nebi operated on eyes. His patients had nothing to lie on but the floor.

We began by removing a large tumor from a girl's back. It was a

simple thing, but I shudder to think what stories will be told about it tomorrow. Next came a merchant bringing his Hejazi wife. His concern for her was so real my heart was completely melted. Then came an elderly lady supported by a group of her women friends. While Paul worked to clean an abscessed breast they kept up a running flow of thanks. It was sweet to hear ourselves so completely praised. Then came a thin village girl with one hand twice its size with pus. How her small frame could have endured such pain I do not know. It was the keenest pleasure to put her to sleep and see Paul clean that hand. In the end we helped Abdul Nebi with his eyes. There seemed to be no end to the red, distorted lids. The last woman was holding a baby in her arms. As I summoned her to the table she passed the baby on to its sister, a child so tiny she could hardly hold it. But what a mother look was in her sweet round face! I tried to make friends with her but she only looked at me the more unflinchingly from her big brown eyes. She would have none of my strange familiarity.

We spend our evenings rolling bandages and sterilizing sponges. Hassan's lively stories have given way to much less pleasing war news. Yes, it is true, here in Hassa we actually have a radio. It was sent in the other day by the Ameer. From its battered looks I gathered no hope that it would work, but, lo and behold, when connected to its battery, it spouted forth a London broadcast! Our periods of listening are limited to the times when the Ameer does not need the battery for his car.

Gamasha and I have again been sallying forth to make calls, and I have come to the conclusion that half the Hassa houses are harboring tuberculosis cases. It is no wonder, for the purpose of a house here seems to be to keep out as much light and air as possible and to keep in all the dirt and darkness it will hold. One young wife sat in a room so dark it could be called nothing better than a dungeon. She told me how she longed for the desert where she was born and lived until her marriage. She had sent for me thinking that I could give her medicine for the lumps and sores that persisted in coming out around her neck and breast. Her body was so slight that I think I could have carried her with one hand. When I learned that her husband's people own a garden I begged her to spend the summer in it. At that she burst into thin, hard laughter. That garden! Did I not know she had never so much as seen it. Her husband did not let her go outside her house.

Today Paul and I were invited to take the noon meal at the home of

one of the older merchants, a man who has travelled as far as Basrah and Bombay. Standing at his great, wooden door he shook hands with us in the easy manner of one accustomed to foreigners. His prominent false teeth testified to his faith in western ways. Still talking, he led us across the tiny courtyard filled with scurrying slave girls, and motioned us into a carpeted, lower room. When Paul and our host had become absorbed in conversation in their corner a slight figure, hidden in the folds of trailing silks, came through a side door and glided toward me. Seating herself so that her back was toward the men she showered me with greetings. She was not old but her beauty had faded — it savored too much of the unearthly. Her eyes shone with unusual brilliance, and her spirits were more than gay.

Suddenly our host ceased his questions about the war, and, motioning toward us, asked if the honorable doctor would be so kind as to examine the mother of his children. As I watched the stethoscope make its familiar rounds I read Paul's face and knew the verdict. It was again the dread disease that, so far, the Arabs have been unable to cope with or understand. Drink milk? Oh yes, there was milk, but she did not like it. Rest every day? But she did not want to, she could not sleep very well even at night. Was there no medicine — no operation that could cure her. Then Paul, glancing again at the thin, blue hands before him shook his head.

Dinner was spread for us on a large, round mat. Covered with dishes of well cooked meat and vegetables, circled about a tray of rice, it made a pleasant sight. Our host began to tear apart the roasted fowls, laying the best pieces in front of Paul. Facing me sat my shy hostess, urging more on me than I could possibly eat. Then, bending her face down to mine, she asked me did I realize that this was a special favor granted by her husband — being allowed to eat with us this way? It was because he knew that the heart of their doctor friend was pure that he did it. I could only smile my answer to so great a tribute to my husband.

Jan. 24

THE AMEER has been out gazelle hunting, and in his absence I have had two unexpected callers. One morning Hassan came in bringing a youth whom he introduced as

the Ameer's slave. Then, with an unmistakable catch in his voice, he added, "And he is a Baluchi." Hassan, himself, is a Baluchi, and ties of blood are strong in the East. I waited for his story, and Hassan told it in his own dramatic way. I looked at the youth. He was pulling one end of his mustache down over a deep scar on his right cheek. That scar, Hassan said, was from the night they had trapped him. But he, and his voice shook with pride, — had killed four of the men before they finally took him.

I motioned for Hassan to serve us coffee that was ready on the charcoal fire. At that the youth pulled up his long sword and sat down. He was the Ameer's personal guard, and he was well dressed. His eyes remained fixed on the coals glowing with a deep color before him. Without lifting his head he suddenly began to speak. I could just make out his low, even words. "My heart," he said, "burns like those coals. It will not forget its freedom." I could find no words to voice my feeling, and a deep silence fell upon us. Before I knew it he had risen to go. Kissing my hand, after the manner of a slave, he left the room.

I sat there alone, trying to shut my eyes to the torture I had witnessed. Slaves I had seen everywhere. Every large establishment was full of them. But they were usually happy and well fed, they had long since accepted their fate. Their masters treated them as charges and were seldom cruel. But here was something different. This boy had grown up free, among a brave and warlike people. His blood would always burn against his bonds. His spirit would never bend.

Slavery in any form is ugly. Here in Arabia it takes a simple form, it is physical. Men steal little children, trap youths and girls, and sell them to work as servants. In the West men dominate hearts and minds until there is no shred of freedom left, and life itself is torture.

Yesterday Fidha came to announce that the Ameer's sister would call on me. Trailing her long, lace gown behind her she came into my room. At my apparent surprise she gaily remarked that she must call before her brother returned. He would not approve, she laughed, but there was no need that he should know. With a childlike joy in the present she spread herself out on the rug beside me. Her roving eyes fell upon the bright cover of my magazine. Without a word she pulled it toward her and began turning over the pages. Suddenly her mouth widened, and her gaze riveted itself upon a picture. I turned to look. It was a Listerine advertisement labelled, "Kissing Technique." A beautiful feminine face was being embraced by a paragon of mascu-

linity. Was he her husband? she gasped, and I heard myself mumbling, "Of course."

There were signs of approval and delight. Then slowly she folded up the magazine, saying simply that she wanted it. She would take it back to Riadh to show her husband. She wanted to teach him to love her that way.

But that was not the end. This morning when I went over for my daily call I found my lady attended by her two young brothers. The younger was a handsome lad whose lean, dark face and Bedouin braids were framed by a clean, white shawl. His eyes were merry and friendly, and we exchanged our greetings over cups of tea. "He wants to go to your country," announced the Ameer's sister. "He thinks your girls are better than ours." I realized the magazine had gone the rounds. The boy did not resent this disclosure of his desire, but smiled at me and said, "I could not sleep last night for thinking of that picture."

Jan. 30



OUR SUPPLIES and drugs have given out, so Paul has asked the Ameer for permission to close up our work and leave. It is a bit hard to make him realize that we cannot keep on operating without an anesthetic. He wants us to stay on, even without medicines.

We have all been down with malaria. One morning, instead of breakfast, there appeared a little voice behind a veil, — to say that Hemza's bones ached and he could not rise. Hassen substituted until he, too, fell ill. Then Hemza, thick with clothes and shuffling in a pair of enormous shoes, returned to his kitchen. There, squatting among his various pots and kettles, he managed to produce very bad food. The rest of us have been less hard hit, undoubtedly because we fed ourselves quinine in time. But it has been enough to dampen our spirits and make us less philosophical about the lack of mail and a four day sand-storm. Abdul Nebi keeps talking about his two children and how much they must miss him. Burhaan will not allow himself to complain but even he brightens at any mention of Bahrain. They all have been buying up presents against their arrival home.

It is good to think that we have made friends in this place. The Ameer's wife gave me a farewell present of a gown and a *bisht*, assuring me that she will pray for our return next year. The Bedouin wife whose childless condition I comforted held my hands and bade me farewell. The grandmother in the Hejazi family told me she loved me as if I were her own daughter. The Ameer's sister wept at our going, and Fidha took me on a farewell tour of the slave quarters. I was touched beyond words by their friendliness, and, if the numberless cups of coffee I drank do not ruin me, I shall remember all with unadulterated pleasure.

And so we shall go back with these people in our hearts and minds. Our horizons have been widened, our sympathies deepened, our hopes increased. God has always used human channels for the working of His Spirit. May He use these days of new friendships and lowly deeds. Mankind belongs to God, and an eternal glory has been shed upon the human race by the love Christ bore to it!



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